

**Virginia Commission for the Arts  
Minutes, October 2, 2007  
Lynchburg**

Members Present: Dr. Lucius Ellsworth, Chair; David Briggs, Nick Covatta, Susan Hirschbiel, Maria Laqueur, Bonita Lestina, Jackie Stone, Beth Temple, and Vaughan Webb

Members Absent: Rod Taylor, Will Trinkle, Deborah Valentine, and Eve Wilson

Staff Present: Peggy Baggett, Foster Billingsley, and Cathy Welborn

Guests: Keith Lee and Nat Marshall, Dance Theatre of Lynchburg

**Introduction**

Lu Ellsworth, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. He thanked June Britt for making the local arrangements for the previous day with the tour of the downtown cultural district, the reception at Amazement Square, and the dinner at the home of the Britts. He then introduced Nat Marshall, President of the board of the Dance Theatre of Lynchburg, who welcomed the Commission representatives and thanked them for the Commission support of the Dance Theatre. Keith Lee, Artistic Director of the Dance Theatre, added his welcome.

David Briggs noted two corrections to the minutes of the June meeting. Beth Temple made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

**State Budget**

Peggy Baggett announced that the Commission would have a 3% reduction in its 2007-08 state funds, effective immediately. She pointed out that the state economic situation may require further cuts later in the year. She reviewed the Commission budget reduction strategies.

Foster Billingsley gave a report on the factors leading to the lower-than-projected state revenues.

**Artist Fellowships**

Peggy Baggett presented the recommendations of the advisory panels for fellowships for poets and classical and jazz composers. David Briggs made a motion to approve the \$5,000 fellowships as recommended by the panelists to:

Melanie Almeder in poetry  
Jennifer Chang in poetry  
Lesley Wheeler in poetry  
David Wojahn in poetry

Ashby Anderson in music composition  
Benjamin Broening in music composition  
Judith Shatin in music composition  
Dan Visconti in music composition

The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Several Commissioners expressed concern about the limited racial diversity among the fellowship applicants and encouraged the Commission staff to ensure that future announcements about the fellowship application deadlines are distributed as widely as possible.

### **Technology Enhancement Grants**

Foster Billingsley presented the panel and staff recommendations on the Technology Enhancement Grants. Bonita Lestina made a motion to approve the staff recommendations. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

### **Requests for Reconsideration of Grant Decisions**

Peggy Baggett presented three requests from arts organizations for reconsideration of grant decisions made at the June meeting. Lu Ellsworth noted that none of the three requests meet the criteria for a formal appeal under the appeals policy of the Commission.

Community Alliance for the Performing Arts Fund. In the discussion it was noted that the letters requesting reconsideration of the grant decision do not specifically address the concerns raised by the panelists. No action was taken on this request.

Second Wind Dance Company. The Commissioners were sympathetic with the concern that other funders would be influenced by the lack of funding from the state arts commission. Stating that there were legitimate reasons to turn down the project grant last spring, Bonita Lestina made a motion to endorse the panel and Commission decision on the grant. The motion was seconded. Nick Covatta then offered an amendment to the motion to request that Second Wind Dance apply for Technical Assistance or a Technology Enhancement Grant this year. The amendment was seconded. The amended motion passed, 7-Yes, 2-No.

Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia. In the discussion it was noted that several panelists had attended performances of the Opera Theatre in the past year and that their concerns about artistic quality were based upon first-hand experience. No action was taken.

### **Report of the Policy/Planning/Budget Committee**

Nick Covatta gave a report on the two meetings of the Policy/Planning/Budget Committee since the previous Commission meeting.

1. **American Shakespeare Center.** Applications for operating support for the American Shakespeare Center were reviewed by major arts institutions panel for two years. The organization then missed the application deadline two years ago. For the past two years the applications have been reviewed by the Area III panel. The Policy Committee recommended that beginning in the spring of 2008, applications from this organization

again go to the major arts institutions panel.

2. **Budget Minimum for Major Arts Institutions.** The budget minimum of \$1 million for an organization to be considered a major arts institution does not need to be changed for 2008-2010. The Commission should consider this issue each time the guidelines are revised.
3. **Budget Minimum for Audit Requirement.** The budget minimum of \$300,000 for two consecutive years for an organization to be required to have an annual audit of its financial records does not need to be changed for 2008-2010. The Commission should consider this issue each time the guidelines are revised.
4. **Appalshop.** Many years ago the Commission voted to make Appalshop of Whitesburg, Kentucky, eligible to apply for Project Grants for activities taking place in Virginia. At the time there were few organizations promoting Appalachian culture in Virginia. Appalshop had not applied to the Commission for many years until the spring of 2007. Appalshop is an excellent organization with outstanding and unique programs. However, there are now several southwest Virginia organizations that promote Appalachian culture. The Policy Committee recommends that the Commission revoke the exception to the guidelines for Appalshop. Virginia organizations and schools may apply to hire Appalshop for artist residencies and media projects in the future.
5. **Public Art Programs.** The growth in the number of public art programs across the state demonstrates an increasing awareness of the importance of the arts on the part of local government officials. The Policy Committee recommends that the public art programs of the state, whether independent organizations or offices within local governments, be eligible for Technical Assistance grants from the Commission, following the precedent set by the Commission when it made the public local arts agencies eligible for Technical Assistance. The public art programs can also apply for Project Grants to support the creation and placement of art in public spaces.
6. **Heritage Awards.** The Commission should begin a regular program of Heritage Awards with the first awards presented in the fall of 2009. Over the next few months Vaughan Webb and the Commission staff will develop specific criteria for selecting the winners, a detailed budget, and guidance for the Award judges.
7. **Next Steps in Strengthening the Local Arts Agency Network.** There was not consensus among the Policy Committee members about opening the General Operating Support program to the local arts agencies that are units of local government. There is not clear support from the field for this strategy, and only a small number of the public local arts agencies would benefit. At the request of the Policy Committee the Commission staff developed a proposal for a new grant category of Services to the Field. The Services to the Field category would be open to both public and private local arts agencies. The draft guidelines for this new category will be distributed to the field for public comment before the Commission meeting on November 29.

In addition, the Policy Committee agreed that the procedure of having a statewide local arts agency review panel did not accomplish the desired objectives for this new method of reviewing operating support applications from the local arts agencies. The Policy Committee recommended discontinuing the separate panel for 2008-2010.

8. **Writers in Virginia Program.** Noting the decline in the number of applications for the Writers in Virginia grants, the Policy Committee recommended that the Commission staff put additional effort into publicizing this funding program over the next few months. If the number of applications does not increase significantly by the December Commission meeting, the Policy Committee recommends discontinuing the program.
9. **Technology Enhancement Grants.** The new Technology Enhancement Grant program appears to be working well, and the Policy Committee recommended no changes for the next biennium. It is too soon to evaluate the long term impact on the arts organizations, but such an evaluation should be made at the end of the 2008-2010 biennium.
10. **Area VI Advisory Panel.** In the spring of 2008, in order to reduce the increasing workload for the Area VI advisory panel, the Commission will experiment with an intensive lead reader system of reviewing the applications for General Operating Support and Project Grants from Area VI. If successful, this method will be used in other areas in the future.
11. **Miscellaneous Recommendations**
  - The Commission is making progress in encouraging the major arts institutions to take a leadership role on behalf of all the arts and should continue working in this area. The question about leadership activities should remain on the General Operating Support application form. The Commission will provide the staff work for the two task forces recommended at the May 23 meeting of the majors, but the leadership for the task forces should come from the majors.
  - Although there are concerns about the direction and management of the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Virginia gets a good return on the membership dues payment made by the Commission even at the increased dues level taking effect this year.
  - Decisions about increasing the maximum amount of the Local Government Challenge Grants and the number of artist fellowships will be deferred until the state budget situation for 2008-2010 is clearer.

Nick Covatta made a motion to accept the recommendations of the Policy/Planning/Budget Committee. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

### **Report of the Arts in Education Committee**

In the absence of Rod Taylor Peggy Baggett gave the report of the Arts in Education Committee.

The Committee recommended no changes in the guidelines for the Teacher Incentive Grants for 2008-2010. The Committee recommended that the Commission staff work with the Virginia Department of Education to see if it is possible to get more information on the status of arts education in Virginia schools. This information would then form the basis for an overall evaluation of the Commission's role in arts education.

At the June Commission meeting the question of whether the Kid Pan Alley songwriting workshops fit the Commission definition of an artist residency was referred to the Arts in Education Committee. The Committee determined that the workshops would fit the artist residency definition if there were clear evidence that teachers at each school were involved in planning the workshops.

### **Miscellaneous Requests**

Peggy Baggett presented the request from the Poetry Society of Virginia to provide travel expenses for the current Virginia Poet Laureate. The Commissioners praised the work of Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda. They were in consensus, however, that it would be inappropriate to provide travel expenses since the Commission does not determine the work of the Poet Laureate.

The request from Westminster Canterbury for an exemption from the Performing Arts Touring Assistance guidelines was referred to the Policy Committee for further study.

### **Other Reports**

Lu Ellsworth reported on the status of the National Endowment for the Arts appropriation. He also reported that NASAA is fully staffed for the first time in two years and that services to the members will increase as a result.

Peggy Baggett reported on the status of the two task forces created by the major arts institutions and on the Governor's Arts Awards.

Peggy Baggett reported that the 2009 Performing Arts Exchange will be held in Norfolk. She recommended that the Commission budget funds in 2009-2010 to hold a showcase of Virginia performers during the conference.

Beth Temple reported that the City of Alexandria has chosen its first Poet Laureate. She also noted that the Alexandria Symphony has retired its debt and is 95% sold out for the current season.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.